

Duke, Daphne

231504

From: Wheat, Jo
Sent: Monday, August 15, 2011 12:02 PM
To: bedwards@blelaw.com
Cc: *Docketing
Subject: FW: Edwards - Exhibit 12 /Carolina Water Service - 2011 -47-WS
Attachments: RHCAProtestLetter_CarolinaWater(08.03.2011).pdf; RHCA_CarolinaWaterSUMMARYProtest INFORMATION(0811).PDF

Ms. Edwards,

Per our earlier phone conversation, I've checked on whether anything further is needed from you in order for us to post your Letter of Protest and its attachment to the Docket Management System, and in fact, there is nothing more needed. Perhaps the documents you indicated were originally mailed on August 3rd will eventually make their way through the U.S. Mail and arrive as well, but some mysteries linger a long time, so this will get the documents immediately filed as they should be. I am forwarding the attached e-mailed documents to be posted in the docket, and I will retain copies to be marked as Exhibit 12 to Volume 2 of the hearing transcript.

Thank you very much for your participation in the public hearing.

Sincerely,

Jo Elizabeth M. Wheat, CVR-CM
Court Reporter
S.C. Public Service Commission
803/896-5108
jo.wheat@psc.sc.gov

cc: Clerk's Office - Daphne

RECEIVED
MAIL/DMS

From: bedwards@blelaw.com [mailto:bedwards@blelaw.com]
Sent: Monday, August 15, 2011 8:56 AM
To: Wheat, Jo
Subject: Re: Edwards - Exhibit 12 /Carolina Water Service - 2011 -47-WS

Ms. Wheat:

I left a message for you on Friday evening. However, please find attached a copy of the protest letter with attachment as filed. It should be marked as Exhibit 12 for the August 4, 2011 Lake Wylie Hearing Exhibits. Should you have any questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you for your assistance, and please confirm your receipt of this email and the two files as attached.

Best Regards,

Bartina L. Edwards, Esq.
The Law Offices of Bartina Edwards
10130 Mallard Creek Rd., Suite 300

Charlotte, NC 28262
P: (704) 944-5540
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Public Service Commission of South Carolina
101 Executive Center Dr., Suite 100
Columbia, SC 29210



Phone: 803-896-5100

Fax: 803-896-5199

www.psc.sc.gov

Email form to: contact@psc.sc.gov

* Required Fields

Letter of Protest

Print

Email

Date: * 8/3/2011

in Docket * 2011 - 47 - WS

Protestant Information:

Name * Bartina L. Edwards
Mailing Address * 16 Oakwood Lane
City, State Zip * Lake Wylie, SC 29710 Phone * (704) 572-1730
E-mail bedwards@blelaw.com

1. What is your connection or interest in this case? * For example, are you a customer of the Company that is the subject of this pending proceeding? (This section must be completed. Attach additional information if necessary.)

I am a customer of Carolinas Water Service, aka Utilities, Inc., and the proposed rate increase serves to adversely impact me as a customer.

2. Please give a concise statement of your protest. * (This section must be completed. Attach additional information if necessary.)

Please see attached. Additionally, in all the years I have been paying a water bill, I have never paid water bills as high as those issued by Carolina Water Service. For well over 26 years of living in Charlotte, NC and other cities and states, my water bill never exceeded \$50.00, with an average of \$35-\$40/month, and this was with an irrigation system the last 12 years, immediately preceding the 4 years of service with Carolina Water Service. I currently have no irrigation system, no grass (as we have all natural areas), and a household of 2 (including me). The service level is unacceptable and the fees ^{are} already excessive. Information as set out more specifically is attached.

3. Do you wish to make an appearance at a hearing in this proceeding, if scheduled, and offer sworn testimony? * (This section should be completed.)

Yes.

RECEIVED

ATTACHMENT TO LETTER OF PROTEST(in Docket 2011-47-WS)
Submitted By: Bartina L. Edwards, August 3, 2011 via US Mail

- Resident: Bartina L. Edwards, 16 Oakwood Lane, Lake Wylie, SC 29701 (River Hills)
c: (704) 572-1730
- Issue: Information herein is being provided as an attachment to and should be considered as a part of Letter of Protest in the matter as referenced above in opposition to the increase being sought by Carolina Water Service, Inc. (aka Utilities, Inc.)
- Statement: The business model as exhibited does not support a rate increase. Service Levels are below standard and prices are already excessive in comparison to other utilities for similar areas and services provided. An outside audit with a third party recommendation should be obtained, if necessary, as the numbers as presented by Carolina Water, in the proposed rate increase do not appear to be realistic or justifiable. Because a company cannot pay its bills because of a flawed business model or flawed business operations is not sufficient justification for a rate increase to be imposed upon and borne by the very customers it seeks to support.
- Service Levels have been inadequate and less than stellar since December 2007 (Bartina Edwards was not a resident in an area serviced by Carolina Water Service, Inc. prior to 2007);
 - Beginning in December 2009, Bartina Edwards (hereinafter referred to as "I") began to experience backup and sewage problems in the mainline, and after first reporting it as a tub stoppage, as feces was backing up into the house through the tub, it was later determined there was a problem with the mainline, and roots had found their way into the line.
 - In February 2010, I reported yet another problem, and on February 22, 2010, I contacted a plumber, who cabled out the main line, and indicated we would need to watch the problem, and if it occurred again, would need to "camera" and get boundary information since a line replacement, if needed, could be a major expense, possibly causing damage to other systems and the yard; and
 - On March 8, 2010, I experienced problems with the hot water waning, interruptions of water flow, and more frequent and consistent water discolorations, consisting of a light brown color; and
 - On March 8, 2010, I contacted a private plumber since I received no explanation or relief from Carolina Water Service.
 - March 18, 2010, I contacted Utilities, Inc (Home Service), as all correspondences received for this service is on Utilities, Inc.

letter head with their logo. The letter(s) received are signed by Michael Backus, as Director of Home Service Customer Service. However, after further review of one of the correspondences setting out information in the event there is an emergency with the water service line, there is a note at the bottom of the letter, not referencing back to anything, just a note, that states, "Home Service USA Repair Management Corp. ("Home Service") is the company responsible for providing this service to you. It does so under a delegated authority from AMT Warranty Corp..."

- After the initial contact, I received no response. Thus, I followed up, and in my follow-up, I was told that I would need to call them back and file a claim ONCE I knew the boundary information (which I did not have). Because this was turning out to be more trouble than it was worth, I did not follow up, and did not file a claim. My total expenses for the main line problems are estimated at \$650. I have not been and was not told at that time by the plumbers that I needed a line replacement. I was merely told if the problems did not correct themselves, I could need one.
- On October 25, 2010, November 12, 2010, December 21, 2010, June 13, 2011, June 21, and June 22, 2011, I continued to have main line and stoppage problems, where I had a plumber come out on each occasion, in addition to the times the plumbers came out between December 2009 and March 2010 to repair the problem and correct the stoppage. To my knowledge, Carolina Water Service only came out twice during all of these problems, and that was only due to the reported leaks. I was told by Carolina Water that stoppage issues were not their problem. And, on several occasions, was hung up on, the call conveniently was disconnected or supervisors did not return the calls.
- Additionally, somewhere during 2010 and 2011, I experienced multiple increases in my water bill, and requested that an investigation into the problem take place. This occurred on three occasions, one of which when I was out of town for almost two weeks, and there was a "spike" in the water bill.
- Water usage restrictions were imposed purportedly due to sewage problems after storms in the 2011 year, but as a resident this appeared to be due to a lack of clear boundary information by Carolina Water Service, and its inability to prepare for normal problems caused by and associated with storms; and
- Initially, I was provided information by customer service representatives that no water service would be interrupted

while my dispute was being reviewed and investigated; however, there was interruption of service with no notice.

- After much prodding and at my request, as best I can recall it was during early 2011 when a meter test was performed, and I was present when the test took place. (Unfortunately, as of the writing of this summary, I have been unable to locate the documentation regarding the meter test). However, there was no problem found and I was informed everything tested as normal. Thus, I requested to be placed on an installment plan. This was granted under the circumstances, and all payments were made thereunder.
- I continue to pay my bill, however, within what was initially explained to me as a grace period, the grace period of ten (10) days after the bill date, as I just truly dislike writing the check for a water bill and will pay by phone using the automated system at the last possible moment prior to dates given on the bill/notices. However, as of July 2011, when calling in to make a payment prior to the date provided on the notice, I was informed that there is no grace period, this policy has changed, and to allow this ten (10) day period is merely a courtesy, and my water can be disconnected at any time after the due date as reflected on the bill. My response to that was, "...this seems to violate notice requirements, as what happens if a payment is made and you don't receive it on time?" There was no valid answer provided, other than, you need to make the payments by the due date. I chose not to pursue this conversation further as it served no purpose to do so.
- During June 2011, I requested that my pipes be reviewed by a plumber to see if the intermittent discoloration was coming from the pipes. While that test was inconclusive, there really is no additional test that can be done without going into the walls and disconnecting the piping. Therefore, I was forced to maintain a water filtration system underneath my house that ties into the water line to ensure we have safe drinking water with minimal discoloration.
- During the March 2011 plumber visits (as set out above), I requested that a leak test be done, as there appeared to be another spike in my bill. This time a leak was located, and was repaired. Thus, I contacted Carolina Services again to report back my findings, and I was informed at that time by Debbie (no last name given) that I would be issued a credit on my bill if I provided the paperwork from the plumber documenting the leak. Thus, on March 23, 2011, I faxed the information as I had been instructed to do. However, subsequently, I received a telephone call indicating this leak was not the type that credits would issue for. Again, I was provided misinformation and was

largely disappointed. In fact, based on the problems I had up until that point, in my opinion warranted a customer service discount of some sort. But, I would not have taken the time to make phone calls, obtain documentation from the plumber, and fax information had I received the accurate information as to the leak type. I was very clear and even read off the information to Debbie, prior to sending it to her.

- On July 7, 2011, I awoke to no water. The water had been completely turned off, and the bill had been paid. Upon calling Carolina Water Service, the representative could offer no explanation as to why I did not have water. She placed me on hold and in about an hour called me back to indicate there were contractors in the area, she did not know why, but the problem would be resolved and my water should be restored as soon as possible. No time frame was given. Concurrent with the phone call (approximately one hour later), I heard water running from outside of my house. Two gentlemen were using water from the front outside faucet rinsing tools and themselves. I had not been notified they were on my property. There was no door tag. There was no knock on the door, no ringing of the doorbell. I was home, as I was going into the office late, and was working from home that morning; my car was visible in the carport.
- Upon going out to where the “repairmen” were located, I inquired as to who they were with. To this day, they did not provide their names or who they were with. They merely answered with, we will be out of your way shortly, we have repaired the water problem, and we are just rising off ourselves and our tools. I was flabbergasted, and just went into the house, since I was not sure I wanted to engage in conversation with them, as my initial reaction was to question whether they were even authorized to be on my property. It merely did not “feel” right, and if they were, they were totally out of business and professional protocol for a repairman.

This concludes my statement. If further information is needed, please contact me at (704) 572-1730 or bedwards@blelaw.com. Thank you.

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